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1. Purpose and Scope. This chapter describes how to maintain case files. It explains how to divide file contents, double cases, repair damaged folders and reconstruct lost cases. The chapter also describes how to make adjustments to ECMS.

2. Case Movement. Each staff member is responsible for making certain that outgoing cases are delivered to their appropriate locations. All cases must be keyed to the proper location before being moved.

3. Filing Cases. Open cases (those needing further action) and closed cases may be housed either in the file room or in other locations throughout the DO.

a. Method of Filing. Most case folders are kept in the File Room on open shelves. The edge of each folder is marked with the last four digits of the employee’s claim number.

(1) The 2x2 terminal digit system is used. The folders are filed by the last 2 digits; then by the first 2 digits. For example, files with the last 4 numbers of the case number ending in 0034, 0234, 1001, 1034, 1234, 2001, and 3489 would be filed as follows.

1001, 2001, 0034, 0234, 1034, 1234, 3489

(2) Each digit has a distinct, brightly-colored background, allowing searchers to locate and shelve the folders with greater ease and accuracy.

b. Case Folders. Case folders should not be returned to the file location unless:

(1) The file room location is the latest entry on the case jacket with a CE's initials and the date of entry; and

(2) No loose mail appears in the folder, unless "drop file" is written on it, along with the initials of the person making the notation and the date of the notation.

3. Filing Cases. (Continued)

c. Cases in Locations Outside of the File Room. When claim files are housed at a CE's work space or some other location, they must be organized in a manner that would allow someone to quickly locate a particular claim file. If they are divided into sections for better work-load management (e.g. under development, awaiting authorization, etc.), the CE must clearly mark the dividers and arrange the sections in file number order.

d. Misfiled Cases. If a case keyed to the File Room cannot be located, a special search is required. If the special search is not successful, claims staff will need to reconstruct the file. See PM 1-400-7

4. Dividing Cases. When the contents of a case file become too thick for one folder, they must be divided. Mail Room staff may decide to divide files on their own, or they may act on request of claims staff. The M&F Clerk will do the following:

a. Prepare a New Folder.

(1) Make up a duplicate folder with the same case number. On the front, at the top of the original case jacket write the letter "A"; on the duplicate folder, write the letter "B". Part B becomes the active folder.

(2) On the front of each folder, write "This case is divided into A and B parts."

b. Divide the Contents.

(1) Skim the case file records and determine a cutoff date for Part A.

(2) Place all correspondence received before the cutoff date in Part A. All correspondence received after the cutoff date should be placed in Part B. Also place Form EE-1 or EE-2, and EE-3 in Part B along with documentation showing compensation paid and any actions still pending.

4. Dividing Cases (Continued)

If it becomes necessary to divide the case more than once, the third folder is labeled "AA", the fourth folder "AAA", etc.

Part B will always be the active folder and will contain the most recent documents, the original EE-1 or EE-2 and EE-3, any documentation showing compensation paid, and all pending actions.

5. Dividing Case Records. When the case file has multiple claims the following steps are taken:

a. Place a divider in the case file so that each survivor's documentation is self-contained.

b. The contents: the EE-2 claim for survivor #1 will be on the bottom. The EE-2 for survivor #2 will be just above the divider, etc. The recommended decision and medical records would be on top of all individual claims in the case file.

6. Repairing Cases. Case folders and their contents sometimes become worn or unreadable due to wear and tear. When this happens, Mail Room staff must repair the folders and contents (though at DO option, claims personnel may handle this task).

Where papers have torn loose from the spindle, the M&F Clerk repairs or strengthens the page with a gummed or self- adhesive reinforcement, or with transparent tape. If torn or damaged documents cannot be mended, and further damage may occur, the M&F Clerk photocopies the documents so that the file will contain a readable copy. Original claim forms must be attached to the photocopies.

7. Reconstructing Case Files. When a case file has been lost and every effort to locate is unsuccessful, it will be necessary to reconstruct the case file. Reconstructing a case file requires that a new case jacket be prepared and duplicate documentation requested from the claimant, medical providers, and other sources.

To do this, a memo must be prepared for the signature of the Supervisory CE. The memo will include a statement describing the effort undertaken to locate the original file and that a duplicate case jacket is necessary. Once signed by the Supervisory CE, the memo will be forwarded to the Case Create Clerk who will create a new case jacket and return it to the responsible CE. Correspondence must then be prepared to all parties associated with the case requesting a copy of any documentation pertinent to the case file. The memo and the letter requesting documentation will then be spindled into the new case jacket. If the lost case should later emerge, it will be necessary for the CE to incorporate all unduplicated material into a single case jacket and discard the unused case file jacket.

8. <u>Location Changes</u>. As cases are moved to different locations in the district office, their locations must be changed in the ECMS. The Systems Manager in each DO keeps a list of location codes. Changes are keyed using ECMS.

a. <u>Notations on Case Jacket</u>. Before keying the change, the M&F Clerk or any individual making the change (CE/SCE, etc.) crosses out the current location on the case jacket. When keying is completed, the M&F clerk checks off the "Keyed" space opposite the location code on the case jacket, list the new location along with the date of the change, and place the folder in the proper pick-up area for routing to the next location.

b. <u>Replacement Grid Sheets</u>. When the jacket has been completely filled up and all lines have been crossed out, a gummed grid sheet with spaces to enter locations and statuses is to be placed on the cover of the case file.

9. <u>Adjustments to the Database</u>. Changes to the Case Management File are sometimes needed due to errors in data entry or changes to the claimant's address or the like.

Corrections to those data elements, which are used to search the database, are especially important. These elements include all name fields, date of covered illness or disease, date of death, and Social Security Number (SSN).

9. Adjustments to the Database. (Continued)

All such changes must be sent to the individual designated as the Payee Change Assistant (PCA). The PCA (or a designee who does not have the authority to enter payments) will make or direct all changes to names and addresses.